

MOSAIC ATELIERS AT TABARKA

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In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries excavations at Tabarka (Thabraca) on the northwest coast of Tunisia uncovered what is still the largest series of tomb mosaics found anywhere.¹ At least a hundred and twenty-five were recorded in the ruins of an urban basilica, two urban cemeteries, the so-called Chapel of Martyrs, and a nearby cemetery. Many are fragmentary, some are now lost, and many were too badly damaged for more than a note of their existence. The finds were reported in the usual archeological journals and published and catalogued elsewhere.² It is not my intention here to survey all the tomb mosaics of Tabarka; rather I propose to continue a study begun in my dissertation on the ateliers that produced them. I shall concentrate on a very few mosaics that epitomize the work of those ateliers, which for convenience I call Ateliers I and II. I shall first define the pictorial types and decor that characterize Tabarkan tomb mosaics, indicating briefly the extent to which they both follow and depart from other North African sepulchral mosaics, such as those from Kelibia, Sousse, and Uppenna.³ I shall then discuss the general charac-

teristics of each atelier, concentrating on those elements of design, iconography, and style that distinguish one atelier from another.

The two groups are markedly different in content, form, and technique. Atelier I is a more inventive workshop, with a varied repertoire ranging from theological subjects to pastoral scenes to standard funerary motifs. Their depictions are often naive, rendering difficult the identification of some of the figural scenes. Their open compositions and impressionistic style are reminiscent of wall paintings, like the third- and fourth-century frescoes in the catacombs in Rome. Atelier II adopts a more limited but nonetheless distinctive repertoire, comprised in large part of stereotyped representations of the cantharus with heraldic birds and orants flanked by candles. Compositions are formal and symmetrical; the figures are solidly conceived and sharply defined. While the links are not yet established, this atelier seems to depend on both a sculptural and a pavement mosaic tradition.

TABARKAN TYPES AND DECOR

The Tabarkan mosaics were used for the same purpose as most North African sepulchral slabs. In cemeteries they served as tomb covers; in enclosures most were grave markers cut into or forming part of the pavement above the actual casket. A few decorate freestanding sarcophagi, generally covering the lid, one side, and one end, as they were often set in a corner in the manner of Western sculptured sarcophagi.

In format the Tabarkan examples differ little from other tomb mosaics, though there are remarkably few horizontally oriented panels like

¹I am extremely grateful to M. Mongi Ennaïfer, Assistant Director for Museums, and particularly Mme. Aïcha Ben Abed, Director of the Musée National du Bardo, Tunis, for their help and generosity in providing facilities to study the mosaics and for permission to publish several of the illustrations. For a useful review of the early literature see *DACL* 15.2 (Paris, 1951), cols. 2146–67.

²R. M. du Coudray LaBlanchère and J. Toutain, "Tombes en mosaïques de Thabraca," *Bibliothèque d'archéologie africaine*, fasc. I (Paris, 1897), 3–28; P. Gauckler, "Mosaïques tombales d'une chapelle de martyrs à Thabraca," *Mon Piot* 13 (1906), 173–227, rpr. with "Note de M. Merlin à propos de la reprise des fouilles en 1910 par le lieutenant Haack dans 'la chapelle des martyrs' de Tabarka," *Cahiers de Tunisie* 20 (1972), 153–201; and Margaret A. Alexander, *The Christian Tomb Mosaics of North Africa*, Diss. (New York University, 1958).

³For a very useful summary of tomb mosaic history, types, and decor see N. Duval, *La mosaïque funéraire dans l'art paléochrétien* (Ravenna, n.d.) (hereafter *Mosaïque funéraire*). For Kelibia, see N. Duval, "L'église du prêtre Félix (région de Kelibia), II, Commentaires," *Karthago* 9 (1958), 179–268; for Sousse, L.

Foucher, *Inventaire des mosaïques de Sousse* (Tunis, 1960); for Uppenna, N. Duval, "Les mosaïques funéraires de l'Enfida et la chronologie des mosaïques funéraires de Tunisie," *RACr* 50 (1974), 145–74 and "Essai d'inventaire et de classement des mosaïques funéraires d'Uppenna," in *Mosaïque funéraire*, 97–119.

those in Kelibia, Sousse, and Uppenna. The overwhelming majority are vertically oriented bipartite or tripartite panels, framed by fillets or decorative borders. They are usually divided into registers, sometimes framed, comprised of superposed or loosely grouped elements. The epitaph is generally at or near the top, that is, over the head of the deceased, though it may be displaced by a dominant symbol such as the crown. The cantharus, figures, or pictorial representations are usually placed at the bottom.

The decor includes the customary funerary symbols and motifs—crown or wreath, cantharus, birds, roses—but is distinguished by such unusual features as orants, figural scenes, and the unique architectural rendering of *Ecclesia Mater* (IMT, 1021).⁴ Though more than one symbolic element may be depicted on a single mosaic, the dominant motifs can be classified as six distinct types: A, the crown or wreath with or without a monogram; B, the cantharus; C, the single figure; D, figural scenes; E, flora and fauna; F, geometric patterns.

Type A. The crown, as a single dominant symbol, is relatively rare on Tabarkan mosaics, though quite popular on those of Kelibia, Sousse, and Uppenna. It is formed of either a rainbow cable or laurel garland, sometimes with floating ribbons. It may enclose the Constantinian monogram with or without alpha and omega (IMT, 1049 and Fig. 4, respectively); the monogrammatic cross, with or without the apocalyptic letters (IMT, 1013 and 1016, respectively); the epitaph (Fig. 8); or a bird (IMT, 1049k).

Type B. The cantharus is represented on at least twenty-one mosaics. It has a classic shape, similar to those from Kelibia, for example: fluted bowl with a high foot, long neck with S-shaped handles, and wide-rimmed mouth (Fig. 8).⁵ Occasionally it is shown as if empty (Fig. 4); more often, following common models, rose vines or grapevines spring from the mouth to trail down the sides, and birds perch on or near the rim (Fig. 8). The cantharus often shares prominence with a crown or wreath (Figs. 4 and 8). Local variations, for example, the depiction of sheep rather than birds coming to drink (Fig. 4) or the addition of a ship as well as a wreath (IMT, 969), show the inventiveness of the Tabarkan mosaicists.

Type C. The single figure, while not unique to Tabarka, is more common there than elsewhere,

with at least thirty examples compared to about fifteen from other sites in Tunisia and Algeria.⁶ The standard figure is an orant, hands projecting from the body, flanked by lighted candles, and with birds or roses at shoulders and/or feet. The orant with extended arms is much less commonly depicted, only once as a sole figure (IMT, 986), sometimes with objects such as tapers and roses (IMT, 1049p), but more often with sheep (Fig. 3). Twice a person is represented holding a volumen (IMT, 942 and 1049q).

Type D. Figural scenes, like the single figure, are a Tabarkan trademark. They include three biblical scenes, Jonah under the gourd vine,⁷ the Sacrifice of Abraham (Fig. 2), and the Good Shepherd (IMT, 984); an orant with adorants carrying candles (IMT, 959); three horsemen in Paradise (Fig. 1); and pastoral scenes (Fig. 3). They rarely share prominence with crown, monogram, or cantharus.

Type E. Flora and fauna include a number of common funerary types: roses, grapevines, trees, pigeons, peacocks, roosters, fish, dolphins, sheep, and a few creatures more popular on secular mosaics, such as a horse (IMT, 984) and a goose(?) with goslings or chicks (IMT, 1028). In general they accompany such major symbols as the cantharus or orant. Fauna warrant consideration as a specific type in the few instances where they are the sole symbolic motifs (Fig. 1, right side) or are important constituents of the depiction, as in hieratic compositions, for example, where lambs flank a tree (Fig. 5) or drink from a cantharus (Fig. 4). The latter types are unique to Tabarkan tomb mosaics.

Type F. Geometric patterns form a quite small group. They include freehand circles, diamonds, checkerboards (IMT, 981), stacked one above the other without any coherent composition, as well as samples from popular pavement compositions, for example, interlacing circles (Fig. 7) or a diagonal grid decorated with stepped squares (IMT, 957). The geometric type has a certain importance as it establishes a link, however tenuous, with the tomb mosaics of Hippo Regius (present-day Annaba), just across the border in Algeria, and the slightly more distant Setif (Sitifis) where geometric patterns are the norm.⁸

⁴Duval, *Mosaïque funéraire*, 62.

⁷This mosaic is not catalogued in IMT; see A. Merlin, *Musée Alaoui*, suppl. 2, fasc. 1, *Musées et collections archéologiques de l'Algérie et de la Tunisie* (Paris, 1921), no. A424.

⁸For Hippo see E. Marec, *Monuments chrétiens d'Hippone, ville épiscopale de Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1958); for Setif, P. A. Février, *Fouilles de Setif: Les basiliques chrétiennes du quartier nord-ouest* (Paris, 1965).

¹IMT = P. Gauckler, *Inventaire des mosaïques de la Gaule et de l'Afrique*, II, *Afrique Proconsulaire (Tunisie)* (Paris, 1910) and supplement by A. Merlin (Paris, 1915).

²Duval, "Kelibia," *passim* and esp. 226–27.

ATELIERS

The large number of tomb mosaics from Tabarka, with their blend of the traditional and the innovative, presuppose one or more well-established local ateliers. Unfortunately only the three famous villa mosaics and fragments of an animal hunt from the trefoil oculus of a luxurious local villa remain of the numbers of mosaics that must have paved the houses and public buildings of that once prosperous seaport.⁹ Whether the tomb mosaic artisans were members of floor mosaic workshops or whether they formed ateliers of their own may never be known. But there were, as stated previously, at least two major ateliers producing tomb mosaics with similar though distinct repertoires and styles. Each was responsible for a large number of mosaics and, judging from appellations in the epitaphs, were patronized by dignitaries of the church, faithful members of the men's and women's monasteries that according to Victor Vitensis existed at Tabarka in the fifth century,¹⁰ local merchants, as well as ordinary Christians. Each workshop was made up of a number of artisans of varying skills; their identification requires a separate study.

Atelier I was a busy shop, supplying nearly all the tomb mosaics found in the Chapel of Martyrs proper and a majority of those from the cemeteries. Its repertoire includes a number of panels with crown or wreath (Type A), cantharus (Type B), flora and fauna (Type E), as well as combinations of the three types. The single figure (Type C) is extremely rare; figural scenes (Type D), biblical and pastoral, are both more common and unique to this atelier. The mosaics are characterized by compartments, often framed; a predilection for decorative borders; short epitaphs and occasionally long inscriptions, with underscored lines; and sometimes the Constantinian monogram with or without the apocalyptic letters.

Atelier II was either a smaller shop or fewer of its mosaics are preserved. Its production comprises the six panels found in the urban basilica,¹¹ several from the cemetery around it, the mosaic-decorated sarcophagi from the Chapel of Pompeia on the south side of the Chapel of Martyrs, and occa-

sional slabs from other cemeteries. Atelier II's repertoire includes the crown (Type A), cantharus (Type B), and geometric patterns (Type F), but its specialty is the single figure (Type C), especially the orant with hands protruding from the body and flanked by candles. The compositions are compactly organized, usually framed by simple fillets; epitaphs are short and seldom underlined; emblems include both the Constantinian monogram and the monogrammatic cross, with or without the alpha and omega.

Atelier I

The products of this workshop are exemplified by five mosaics: those of deacon Crescentinus and an unknown person (*IMT*, 1024 and 1025), *pater* and *mat(er)* Stercorius and Crescentia (*IMT*, 1026),¹² Victoria *mater dei famula*, and Glyceria (*IMT*, 1045) from the Chapel of Martyrs (Figs. 1, 4, 5, respectively), that of Calendionis and Fortunatas¹³ from the urban cemetery (Fig. 2), and that of Eupraxius (*IMT*, 987) from the cemetery five hundred meters from the basilica (Fig. 3).

The panels are divided into superposed compartments and framed by heavy geometric borders (parallelograms in perspective, squared wave crests, simple and interrupted frets) of types common to pavement mosaics. Inscriptions, with underscored lines, include long invocations and/or short epitaphs ending with the acclamation *in pace*. At the end of Victoria's epitaph and in the inscription linking the mosaic of Stercorius and Crescentia with that of its neighbor, the day the deceased rendered up his spirit, *red(didit)*, *redi(derunt)* is recorded. The latter formula is rarely included in the mosaics of either Atelier I or II.

In subject matter these mosaics are a fair sample of the varied, even imaginative, repertoire of Atelier I. The figural scenes in particular contribute significantly to our knowledge of North African Christian iconography. Several are free adaptations of everyday events, for example, the orant and lamb on the mosaic of Eupraxius (Fig. 3): the orant pose and the fact that the scene is represented on a Christian tomb mosaic are all that distinguish it from secular scenes of pastoral life. It is unique among tomb mosaics in placing the figures in a landscape, depicted as a gray ground with tree and rose, clearly differentiated from the white "sky" above. The scene of the three horsemen on

⁹I. Lavin, "The Hunting Mosaics of Antioch and Their Sources," *DOP* 17 (1963), 239–40, figs. 96–98, and K. M. D. Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman Africa: Studies in Iconography and Patronage* (Oxford, 1978), 122, 271–72, figs. 111–113.

¹⁰Victor Vitensis, *De persecutione Vandalica*, PL 58, cols. 179 ff.

¹¹An exception may be the mosaic of Elia (*IMT*, 1053); in style and technique it has a certain affinity to the mosaics of Atelier I, but only the hands protrude in the pose characteristic of Atelier II. It is perhaps a transitional work.

¹²The reading of the two names is very uncertain; I have kept those published in *IMT*.

¹³Merlin, *Musée Alaoui*, no. A426.

the mosaic of Crescentinus (Fig. 1) is borrowed from scenes of the hunt, a very popular theme in North African mosaics. This last representation and that on the mosaic of Calendionis and Fortunatas (Fig. 2) have been only perfunctorily published, and their particular religious significance has not been recognized. Since they are important to an understanding of the distinctive contribution of the pictorial repertoire of Atelier I to tomb mosaic iconography, it is necessary to diverge from the main theme and describe them in some detail. The identifications were first proposed in my dissertation and are little changed here.

The scene above the inscription on deacon Crescentinus' panel (Fig. 1) shows three horsemen amid roses and birds circling round a circular object suspended from a blue and green (glass) band at the top. It has been described as three horsemen in Paradise, the garden symbolized by the roses, birds, and a "tree upside down."¹⁴ To a certain degree this is correct, but the significance of the scene and its relationship to the inscription below is obscured by the identification of the object as a tree. The object is comprised of a yellowish pink "trunk" outlined in red, the customary manner for depicting flesh, and "foliage" in the form of a red and green ring with fluttering ribbons. In treatment and position it is unlike any Tabarkan tree. I suggest that it is not a tree but a crown suspended from heaven by the Hand of God, like that represented above the head of the saint on the silver casket from Ain Zirara.¹⁵ It is the "crown of righteousness," the prize sought by the horsemen, one of whom raises his arms in anticipation and adoration. The theme of promised salvation recurs at the bottom of the panel where a dolphin guides a ship, marked by the apocalyptic letters, to safety in Christ, symbolized by the Constantinian monogram depicted at the far right. Both scenes are visual counterparts to the metric inscription which refers to Crescentinus as "angelorum oves, martyrum comes" and asks that he be granted sanctity and a calm life.

The figural scene on the mosaic of Calendionis and Fortunatas (Fig. 2) has no explanatory text, and the lack of organic unity and coherent action has hindered its identification. It is not just a meaningless depiction of anonymous figures but a representation of the Sacrifice of Abraham. The

mound is the sacrificial altar of Isaac, the short orant figure to the left. The tall figure at the right must be Abraham, with face outlined in the gray of old age rather than the usual red. Below stand the sacrificial lamb and the two young men whom Abraham invited to accompany them. With raised arms and frontal gaze they command the viewer to bear witness to the holy scene. The half-destroyed object to the far right is probably the bundle of faggots referred to in Genesis. A similar representation, with Isaac in orant pose and separated from Abraham, and with a bundle of faggots, is depicted in a third-century fresco in the Chapel of Sacraments in the Catacomb of Callixtus in Rome. The presence of the Hand of God would provide positive identification, but it is by no means a required symbol in pictorial representations.¹⁶

This is not the only biblical scene in the Atelier I repertoire. Jonah under the gourd vine appears on a fragment of the lid of a mosaic-covered sarcophagus,¹⁷ found near the previous mosaic, and the Good Shepherd is represented on another tomb cover (*IMT*, 984). More emblematic are the representations on the mosaics of Stercorius and Crescentia (Fig. 4) and Victoria and Glyceria (Fig. 5) where lambs come to drink of the fountain and of the tree of life.

The variety of scenes borrowed from pagan and Christian sources is evidence that the mosaicists of Atelier I had access to a number of different models. These might have been floor mosaics or wall paintings or mosaics, perhaps even manuscript illumination. Terra-cotta plates may well have been the immediate source, both iconographic and compositional, for such scenes as the Sacrifice of Abraham.¹⁸ For more stereotyped representations, small objects such as lamps might have served as intermediaries.

Compositionally as well as iconographically the Atelier I mosaicists show their debt to more monumental representations. A not uncommon layout in Jewish and Christian floor mosaics was the placement of heaven, earth, and sea in a logical sequence. This concept may lie behind the placement of the scene of the three horsemen in Paradise at the top of the mosaic of Crescentinus, while the dolphin and ship, symbolic of sea, are placed

¹⁴ W. de Gruneisen, *Sainte Marie Antiquae* (Rome, 1911), 229–33.

¹⁵ G. B. De Rossi, "La capsella argentea africana," *BACr* (1887–88), 118–29.

¹⁶ I. Speyart van Woerden, "The Iconography of the Sacrifice of Abraham," *VC* 15 (1961), esp. 220–27 and illustrations.

¹⁷ Merlin, *Musée Alaoui*, no. A424.

¹⁸ J. W. Salomonson, *Voluptatem spectandi non perdat sed mutet. Observations sur l'iconographie du martyre en Afrique romaine* (Amsterdam-Oxford-New York, 1979), 36 and pls. 28 and 30a.



1. Tomb mosaics of Crescentinus and unknown person, Musée National du Bardo, Tunis (photo: Musée du Bardo)



2. Tomb mosaic of Calpurnia Fortunata and her family, Musée National du Bardo, Tunis (photo: Musée du Bardo)



3. Tomb mosaic of Eupraxia, Musée National du Bardo, Tunis (photo: Musée du Bardo)



4. Tomb mosaic of Stercorius and Crescentia, Musée National du Bardo, Tunis (photo: Robert L. Alexander)



5. Tomb mosaic of Victoria and Glyceria, Musée National du Bardo, Tunis (photo: Robert L. Alexander)



6. Tomb mosaic of Victoria Elias, Musée National du Bardo, Tunis (photo: Musée du Bardo)



7. Sarcophagus of Dardanius, Musée National du Bardo, Tunis
(photo: Musée du Bardo)



8. Tomb mosaic of Bonifatia, Musée National du Bardo, Tunis (photo: Musée du Bardo)

at the bottom. Similarly, on the mosaic of Calendionis and Fortunatas, the ribbon between the beaks of two birds simulates the canopy of heaven sheltering the earthly event of the Sacrifice of Abraham, while in the bottom compartment is a ship, emblematic of sea.

Although clearly not all the mosaics illustrated here are by the same hand—compare, for example, that of Calendionis and Fortunatas with that of Eupraxius—there are common stylistic features. Figures are isolated and spread over the surface with no compositional, spatial, or proportional relationship. Human figures are built up of geometric shapes—rectangular bodies and oversized round heads, with shapeless arms and legs. Nose, mouth, and fingers are marked by single short lines; a dot encircled in black indicates eyes. Formless rose blossoms sprout from spiky stems with bare branches. Grapevines are thin with stylized triangular leaves and grape clusters. Trees consist of a straight trunk with the stump of a main branch and colorful striations for foliage. Birds have ovoid bodies, fantails, and small heads with tiny beaks and one white dot for an eye. Especially characteristic are the two straight wing lines that project from the back and the white lines marking belly, tail, and throat. The wiry outlines and sketchy markings are particularly apparent in the sheep.

The mosaics of Atelier I are as clearly differentiated by materials and technique as by iconography and style. There is a lavish use of marble. The white marble used in many backgrounds must have been imported, for there is no really white marble in Tunisia. The pinks and yellows come from the Numidian marble quarries in Chemtou. This stone would have been readily available, even economical, as Tabarka was a major port for the exportation of this popular colorful marble. Local limestone was used for the deeper shades of red, yellow, ochre, green, brown, tan, and gray. Not content with these colors, Atelier I artisans enlivened costumes, plumage, and foliage with the brilliant orange, yellow, green, blue, and turquoise of glass. Tesserae are of average size (.8–1 cm for background and figures, .4–.5 cm for faces and hands). Contrary to normal floor-mosaic practice, background tesserae seldom form strong contour lines around the figures and are rarely laid in straight rows, even when such regularity was possible and appropriate. Tesserae simply fill the spaces around the figures. As a result, the clear distinction between figures and ground is lost, cre-

ating the impression that they were made simultaneously. Perhaps this is to be expected, since the small sizes of tomb mosaics, in contrast to large pavements, did not require a mosaicist to lay out the design and apprentices to fill in the background. The lack of precision in the background, the flat style, and loosely constructed compositions create a pictorial, almost painterly effect that characterizes the mosaics of Atelier I.

Atelier II

The mosaics of Atelier II, in contrast to those of Atelier I, have confined, symmetrical compositions, dominated by large forms, and figures with recognizable features. The repertoire is much smaller than that of Atelier I and is adequately illustrated by three monuments: the grave marker of Victoria Elias and unknown man (*IMT*, 1022) and Bonifatia (*IMT*, 1049g) from the Chapel of Martyrs (Figs. 6 and 8), and the sarcophagus of Dardanius (*IMT*, 941) from an enclosure in the urban cemetery (Fig. 7). Typical are the simple frames and hieratic compositions in which generally a single figure or symbol dominates the panel. Epitaphs are short, as in Atelier I mosaics, but are more often placed in separate compartments—in a crown or wreath, as in the mosaic of Bonifatia or, as in the mosaic of Victoria Elias, around the head of the orant. The major pictorial types are the single figure (Type C) and a combination of crown or wreath and cantharus (Type A/B). Most of the geometric patterns, like that on the end of the sarcophagus of Dardanius, were made in this workshop.

The most distinctive type is the single figure. The orant and bust on the mosaic of Victoria Elias (Fig. 6) are a unique concession to a dual burial. The figure is almost invariably an orant; the exceptions are a male and female figure each holding a volumen (*IMT*, 1049q and 942). The orant, whether male or female, whether on the tomb of an adult or a child, is always represented frontally, the attitude of prayer indicated only by hands protruding from the sides, as in the mosaics illustrated here. Lighted candles usually flank the figure, and birds perch on or near the shoulders and at the feet.

When viewed en masse, the figures have an almost numbing sameness. Yet taken individually, one is aware of certain differences, aside from the obvious ones of male and female costume. The veil worn by the orant on the mosaic of Victoria Elias,

for example, may distinguish women, perhaps religious women, from girls; some female figures wear necklaces. Men are sometimes bearded, like the bust of the so-called scribe on Victoria Elias' mosaic. With his worried expression, dark beard, and caplike hair dipping low over his wrinkled forehead, he seems to be modeled after a portrait bust.¹⁹ But the same visage is repeated for another bust, perhaps of a *ensor frumentarius* (IMT, 971), and for the male figure with volumen. The figures are, then, not portraits but faithful copies of a particular workshop cartoon, individualized by their attributes: a stylus and writing desk, a grain measure and measuring rod, or a volumen. Although the similarity of pose, dress, and expression prevent these silhouettes from being recognizable as individuals, one cannot deny their presence. Pressed into the confines of a narrow panel and packed round by emblematic candles, birds, and flowers, these uncompromisingly frontal figures have the compelling force of an icon.

Atelier II's hieratic compositions, whether orant or cantharus, are totally different from the informal compositions of Atelier I. A central figure, human or inanimate, dominates the panel. Flowers, birds, and an occasional geometric motif fill the remaining spaces, even the corners of compartments, as in the mosaic of Bonifatia (Fig. 8). The figures are statuesque and, with their long garments falling to the ankles or over the feet, self-contained; only the hands break the contours. With their splayed-out feet "supported" by flowers or birds, they do not hover in air like their companions on the mosaics of Atelier I. Facial features are distinctly indicated, black or brown brows arch over almond-shaped eyes with large pupils. The brow line continues down to delineate a long square-tipped nose, lips are indicated by two red lines, and hands have long fingers with clearly differentiated thumbs. Birds and flowers are as firmly and compactly shaped as the human figures. The pigeons, with plump breasts and rounded tails, seem to be another species from those of Atelier I, but the difference is as much stylistic as typological. No long projecting wing lines break the outlines; white lines strongly divide the wing from the body. Roses, too, are well-shaped, with rounded calyx marked by two or three white tesserae, sepals extending beyond the tip, and leafy stems rising from sturdy bases.

The differences in appearance and style between the mosaics of Atelier II and Atelier I are related to the differences in the materials and techniques. Limestone tesserae predominate in the works of Atelier II, and, though the same colors must have been obtainable, the palette is more somber, favoring dark and olive greens, ochre, dark red, brown, and some yellow, rarely brightened by colorful glass. The mosaicists of Atelier II adhered more closely to traditional techniques. Background tesserae sometimes form contours around the figures and are often laid in regular rows, as in the upper part of the mosaic of Victoria Elias, for example. This creates a more uniform background, thus contributing to the clarity of the design and the distinctness of the individual shapes.

CONCLUSIONS

Certain questions inevitably arise. When were these two ateliers active? Were they contemporary, or did one precede the other, if only by a relatively short time? Perhaps these questions can be answered with further archeological investigation and detailed typological and stylistic comparisons with pavement mosaics as well as other sepulchral mosaics. For the time being, it would seem that the generally accepted date of the late fourth–first half of the fifth century must suffice.²⁰ The laconic epitaphs and the use of the Constantinian monogram in the products of both ateliers are perhaps some corroboration. The Constantinian monogram, introduced in the fourth century,²¹ and with the apocalyptic letters not before the late fourth–early fifth century, is the only type used by Atelier I. Atelier II, while retaining the Constantinian monogram, also uses the monogrammatic cross, with or without alpha and omega. Since the latter type of monogram is generally dated to the fifth century, it seems likely that Atelier II began slightly later or, in any event, continued longer than Atelier I.

More positive evidence for a date within the fifth century for Atelier II is provided by the type of orant with hands protruding from the body, which, as we have seen, was restricted to Tabarka and to Atelier II. Outside of Tabarka, the only other example recorded is that on the tomb mosaic

²⁰ N. Duval, "Enfida," 146; for a somewhat later date see Février, *Setif*, 57.

²¹ P. Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne depuis les origines jusqu'à l'invasion arabe*, III (Paris, 1905), 185; the statement is repeated by Février, *Setif*, 70.

¹⁹ For references to orants as portraits see E. Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture* (New York, n.d.), 47.

of Romanilla from Kherbet Guidra (Sertei?) in Algeria.²² The mosaic is destroyed, but a colored print permits verification of the hand position. Though no stylistic relationship can be established, it would seem that this lone example must have been derived from the well-established group at Tabarka. Since Romanilla died in 442, the Tabarkan orant type must have been introduced there in the first half of the fifth century at the latest.

Whatever the chronological relationship between Ateliers I and II, it is clear that they derive from two different iconographic and stylistic traditions. It is probably fruitless to try to establish the source of the various figural scenes on the mosaics of Atelier I. The representation of the three horsemen on the mosaic of Crescentinus (Fig. 1) may be unique, a response to a particular demand. Biblical scenes, like the Sacrifice of Abraham and Jonah under the gourd vine, were common property. As Augustine wrote: "These sublime happenings have been sung by so many lips and depicted in so many places that nobody can be ignorant of them, even those who act as though they had never noticed these things."²³

Stylistically the mosaics of Atelier I, despite local and individual mannerisms, share in the common traits of the popular vernacular style of late antique art. The large dolphin, ship, and monogram cramped in the narrow bottom compartment of the mosaic of Crescentinus (Fig. 1) are reminiscent of the packed scenes in the friezes on the Arch of Constantine in Rome.²⁴ The stumpy, ill-proportioned figures in the scene of the three horsemen, or those in the mosaics of Calendionis and Fortunatas (Fig. 2) and Eupraxius (Fig. 3), are local variations of common types. The figures and objects spread over the surface without regard for spatial or pictorial relationships and, with their generally impressionistic style, are comparable to wall paintings, such as those in the catacombs of Rome. The varied textures of the mosaics, resulting from the mixture of marble, limestone, and glass tesserae, add to the impression that behind the mosaics of Atelier I is a painterly rather than a mosaic tradition.

Atelier II mosaics have a completely different origin. The compositions are compact and symmetrical, filled with single solemn monumental figures that seem to rely on a sculptural tradition.²⁵ The busts of the scribe (Fig. 6) and that of the *mentor frumentarius* are certainly copied from stone portrait types. It is inevitable that one tries to derive the orant figures from the Punic figure-sarcophagi of the region, but there is no transitional link. The Neo-Punic stele are too late and too close to popular art in composition and style to act as intermediaries.²⁶ Stylistically the mosaics of Victoria Elias, Dardanius, and Bonifatia (Figs. 6–8)—surely the work of the same mosaicist—and the villa mosaics from Tabarka have certain affinities, in firmness and compactness of form and outline. But a comparison makes even more obvious the greater anticlassicism of the tomb mosaics. Yet the uniformity of the material, largely smooth limestone, and the evenness and regularity with which the tesserae are laid indicate that the mosaicists of Atelier II were trained in the mosaic tradition.

Tabarka, with its lively trade in cork, olive oil, animals, and Numidian marble, was open to contacts from abroad. At the same time, situated on the main highway from Carthage to the capitals of Numidia and Mauretania, it must have been aware of artistic movements throughout the North African littoral. Augustine passed through many times and must have stimulated thought and activity. The tomb mosaicists seem to have responded in some ways to these stimuli, yet their products show remarkably little specific relationship with tomb mosaics elsewhere. P. Gauckler's characterization of the mosaics from the Chapel of Martyrs as "produits spontanés, populaires, d'un atelier local, autochtone et presque autodidacte . . ." is to a great degree valid.²⁷ Yet these humble, even naive mosaics, for all their insularity, still retain traces of that liveliness and inventiveness that distinguished the mosaics of North Africa in the third and fourth centuries.

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²² Février, *Setif*, 57.

²³ Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, 22.73 (PL 42, col. 446); cf. trans. in F. van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, trans. B. Battershaw and G. P. Lamb (London-New York, 1961), 324.

²⁴ See the succinct remarks on late antique art in E. Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977), 7–8.

²⁵ Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture*, 47.

²⁶ J. D. Breckenridge, "Christian Funerary Portraits in Mosaic," *Gesta*, 13.2 (1974), 31–32.

²⁷ Gauckler, "Mosaïques tombales," 225 = *Cahiers de Tunisie* 20 (1972), 193.